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Pioneer Life In Boone County

Written by JANE GREGORY STEVENSON, 1900, Aged 68

My Grandfather Gregory was born and raised in Scotland. He, with two brothers, came to America a few years before the War of the Revolution. Their names were Moses, my grandfather, Jeremiah, and Stephen. They settled and married somewhere in Connecticut. When the war broke out, he like many others, thought it a great crime to rebel against the king, but never took up arms on either side.

When the war was over, he with others was banished to Newfoundland, at St. Johns, and there my father, Peter Gregory was born, August 18th, 1789. After the limit of banishment was over, my grandfather and family returned to the United States and settled in the state of New York. He lived to see his mistake and raised his boys to be true, loyal citizens to the new government. They all voted the Whig ticket. He lived and held on true to his faith in his Savior to the day of his death, which occurred in January, 1822. My Grandmother Gregory died about the same time, only three days difference in their deaths. I do not know much of her history.

Our mother's maiden name was Phoebe Carroll. She was the youngest daughter of William and Phoebe Carroll. Our grandmother's maiden name was Phoebe Wortman. She was the daughter of a German doctor. She was born in New Jersey; from there she came with her parents to the state of Pennsylvania, where she was married to our grandfather, William Carroll. He was a Revolutionary soldier, fought both on land and sea, and part of the time directly under Washington. He was in the service seven years and was never wounded.

Our mother was born in Lycoming county, Pennsylvania, January 8th, 1801, and when quite young removed with her parents to the state of New York, Allegany county. There at the age of twenty she was married to our father, Peter Gregory, aged thirty-two. To this union were born twelve children, three of whom died in infancy. The other nine lived to maturity. One daughter, Mary A. Gregory, died at the age of nineteen and is buried in Eagle Village ceme-

tery, the family burial place. Eight children lived to rear families. Their names are James, Benjamin M., Lorena, Mary A., Jane, William Lewis, John P., Emily, Martha A.

I was the fifth child, born in the state of New York, Allegany county, December 5th, 1831. I came with my parents to this state (Indiana) in the spring of 1834. We came all the way in a two-horse wagon; were six weeks on the road. James, the oldest, was eleven, and Lewis, the youngest, six months old. We first settled in Marion county, ten miles north of Indianapolis, which was then a mere village. The foundation of the first state house was just laid.

About a year later my father bought a farm in the southeast corner of Boone county, to which they soon moved. The family was there raised, until like birds in the nest they had to scatter and flutter away, some to distant lands, some to the tomb. The same farm is now owned by the heirs of my brother, B. M. Gregory, who died July 16, 1899.

When my father moved to this farm there were only about fifteen acres of cleared land and a log cabin made of round logs, the cracks chinked and daubed with clay mortar. It had a chimney made of blocks of wood about four feet long, and at the top finished up with small sticks and daubed well inside with clay mortar. About four feet from the fire was a pole, called the lug pole, to which were attached two or three chains, with hooks on which to hang cooking vessels. My mother made great pots of hominy and hung them on these chains to cook.

The next year my father built another room, with a space of about ten feet from the former one. It was larger than the old one and built of hewed logs. It was a story and a half high, with a ladder to go upstairs in the space between the two rooms. This entry was enclosed at the west end. On the east side of the house, which fronted the Michigan road, was a big porch the whole length of the houses. The roof was made of clapboards about four feet long, nailed on nicely. There was a brick chimney and two good-sized windows. The old house was also covered with clapboards, held down with weight poles. The weight poles were long, heavy poles laid across the boards, and a square block about two feet long laid between, and so on until the top was reached. The old house had only one small window and a puncheon floor, which

was a big log split in two or three pieces and hewed off with an axe or adz; perhaps only an axe as tools were scarce in those early days. The house stood back from the road perhaps five or six rods, on a hill sloping toward the road.

At the foot of the hill was a spring from which we used water for several years. The spring was walled up with big flat rocks, and we had a milk house built near it so the cool water passed through it all the time. From the spring ran a brook which crossed the path to the big road, over which was built a good plank bridge. The spring was shaded by beautiful walnut, willow and locust trees. Below the bridge was a large calamus patch, which was always a delight to the children.

In those early days the furniture was as rude as the houses. My father made his own bedsteads. The beds were held up with ropes made for the purpose. Holes were bored through the bed rails and the ropes stretched across each way very tightly. With a straw and feather bed on top it made a very good bed to rest on. Chairs, if any, were splint bottom, and some had only stools.

Our home was located about one-fourth of a mile south of a little village called Eagle Village, with only a few houses and a postoffice. After a few years people of various trades moved in, and also a dry goods store. We then could get a great many things in the furniture line we did not have before. I remember distinctly a set of chairs my father had made by a man by the name of Bailey. They were splint bottomed chairs painted green, and the backs curved a little. We also got better bedsteads. Everything was paid for in some kind of trade, there being no home market for anything, and Indianapolis was yet too small to afford much market. I have taken eggs to our village store and only got three cents per dozen.

When my parents first came here there were no grain mills closer than Indianapolis or Broad Ripple, ten miles away. But it was not long till there were mills much closer, as Eagle Creek afforded many good locations for mills. About the year 1839 a Mr. George Dye built a grain and saw mill on Eagle Creek one mile west of our place and a quarter of a mile east of where Zionsville now stands. It was built at the

bend of the creek. It was a great blessing to our neighborhood.

Everything at that date was in a rude and primitive condition. It had only been five years since the Michigan or State road had been surveyed and cut out, and of course was very rough and imperfect. I well remember the great log heaps left by the workmen in many places along the road on either side, especially where the land was low and marshy. In the spring the frogs could be heard for miles around those marshy places, and the forest trees on either side of the road looked like great walls of nature's own make. But this under the sway of the white man's axe rapidly passed away and gave room to the broad fields of waving grain. The road was then a hundred feet wide. The streams of any size were all bridged by the government with good wooden bridges, but no fine iron ones like we see now. In winter time the roads became impassible, except on horseback or afoot.

The mail for several years was carried on horseback, but there being so few people and postage so high, there was very little writing done. I heard my mother say that when they first came here they had to pay twenty-five cents postage for a letter from their home country, but they gave it as freely as they would for food, so great was their anxiety to hear from their native home and loved ones left behind. Later on in summer when roads were good the mail was carried in the stage coach, drawn by four horses. In winter when roads were bad it was carried in a big wagon prepared for the bad roads and was called the mud wagon. The stage coach was quite a nice affair. It was large and strong, fixed on a swing so it would rock back and forth by the motion of the carriage, and was large enough for nine persons to sit in comfortably, and sometimes there would be one or two outside by the driver. The baggage was strapped on behind and sometimes thrown on top. The driver had a very long horn which he would blow when approaching any stopping place. The coach was always full of passengers. It used to be said there was always room for one more. They changed horses about every twenty miles and always went on a fast trot.

Public houses were plenty in those days, perhaps only one or two miles apart along the Michigan road, and were

called taverns. All had plenty of custom, so great was emigration. About the year 1836 or 1837 a family by the name of Larimore came to our village and built a tavern which was said to be the best and most commodious house between Indianapolis and Logansport. Mr. Henry Nicholas, of Northfield, was the contracting carpenter. It was a frame building two stories high, and had a cupola and bell on top.

The bell was a great attraction to children, as it was the only bell they had ever heard, there being no school houses or churches with bells as we have nowadays. When the bell was ringing, I remember the older children told us it said, "pigtail done! pigtail done!" which we verily believed. The same bell is now on the old home place, owned by the grandson of my father, Peter Gregory, and Larimore, Frank Gregory.

Schoolhouses were scarce and most of them built of logs, like the dwelling houses, with a big fireplace in one end which the pupils sat around. And while their faces would burn their backs would chill. In many places the schoolhouse answered for both school and church. They also often held religious services at private houses.

The roads being so bad, the mode of travel, besides the coaches, was by horseback, or afoot, especially in winter. It was no uncommon sight to see two or three men passing along with their knapsacks on their backs. Nobody thought of calling them tramps as they do now. I remember once a cousin from Michigan visiting us, who came all the way afoot. It was in March. He stayed about three weeks and brother James went home with him the same way.

In the fall when the roads were good, emigration was so great that covered wagons might be seen almost any time you might look out. My mother was an expert at making cheese and she always kept light bread baked and a little sign out, "Bread and Cheese," by which she sold a great deal to the passers-by and thus kept herself in pocket change. It was a common remark, "There lives a Yankee woman, she knows how to make good cheese." She also sold a great deal to our village people, especially to the tavern.

As the country was sparsely settled, schools were scarce and teachers were ignorant and poorly qualified for their business. I remember they were required to teach Reading, Spelling, Writing, and Arithmetic as far as the rule of three.

Those qualifications were written in an article of agreement, with the number of days to be taught and the price per scholar. Sometimes they would state what kind of pay they would receive; if married they would take some kind of produce or dry goods and groceries, etc.

I well remember the first school I attended. It was at Eagle Village in a log house which had formerly been a dwelling. The seats were benches, without any backs and sometimes too high for the children's feet to touch the floor; no desk in front to lean upon. They bored holes in the walls in which they put long, strong pins and placed a wide board on those pins, thus forming a writing desk. In front was a bench to sit on, and while writing their backs were to the teacher.

Our teacher was an old gray-headed man by the name of Boman. He was also a Methodist preacher. He would let the pupils all study aloud, and when they studied their spelling lessons they could be heard for a long distance. I remember very distinctly sitting by a girl by the name of Mary Beard, much larger than myself. How much I was interested in hearing her repeat the alphabet! She would say, "big A, little a, big B, little b," and so on to the end of the alphabet, until she attracted the attention of the teacher, when he began to mimic her. She looked much ashamed and then turned to her own lesson. I thought she was doing the right thing and that she was a very wise girl to know all the alphabet, and I didn't know any of it. And this was a sample of the schools and teacher we had for several years.

A few years later an eastern man by the name of William Farlin came to our neighborhood, who was much in advance of the former teachers. He first taught about a half a mile west of where Zionsville now stands, and my older brothers and sisters went there all one winter and would almost freeze sometimes. It was near two miles from home. I went there to summer schools. At one time it rained too hard for us to go home and we scattered around among the children. I remember I and my older sister went home with some little girls by the name of Rodman, all of whom have long since passed on. I well remember how glad I was to get to go home with those little girls and what a jolly time we had wading the branch that ran close by their house. We had

to cross Eagle Creek going to and from school, and sometimes it got very high and dangerous to cross. Mr. Farlin looked after us rainy times, that we crossed the creek safely. He afterwards moved to Eagle Village and was our teacher for several years.

Up to this date, 1841, all kinds or any kind of book that the parents happened to have were used. Webster's Elementary Spelling Book was used for beginners for both spelling and reading. Mr. Farlin first introduced a series of reading books called Worcester's Readers. We used Webster's Speller, Kirkham's Grammar, Fowler and Smiley's Arithmetic, and Olney's Geography. About the year 1848 McGuffey's series were introduced, and Mitchell's Geography, Butler's Grammar, and Ray's Arithmetic. Since that time many changes have been made.

The school government was then so different too. The teacher was termed the master, and as such he posed, and generally kept two or three gads standing in the corner. Mr. Farlin first taught he was the teacher and not the master. He also taught strict obedience.

I will now tell you of the rise and fall of our village. Our village which first consisted of only a few log houses and the postoffice soon increased in both population and business, until it became a thriving little town. We had two taverns, one Odd Fellow's hall, two churches, a good schoolhouse, three drygoods stores, one or two shoeshops, two blacksmith shops, several carpenter shops, one tanyard, one sadlery, and other works of industry. Two doctors, and last but not least, a salaratus factory. Salaratus was an alkali used as we now use soda. It was hard and lumpy and had to be pulverized and dissolved in water before using.

About the year 1846 a man by the name of James Armstrong came to our village and tried to run a salaratus factory; but he knew better how to whip his wife than to make salaratus. The citizens got tired of his wife-whipping and thought to put a stop to it. They collected together one night and managed to get him out, when he discovered their intentions and became badly frightened and begged piteously. They said his hair stood straight on his head. His wife finally came to his rescue. She was Dutch, and talked very broken. She said, "Ments, if there be any ments among you, go to your

homps, if you have any homps. Jamps is a gude and kint husband. He directs me to the Bible in all I does." So of course they went to their homes and left them to fight it out, but I don't think there was any more wife beating done while they lived there.

About the year 1849 a Mr. Gardner came to our village and succeeded Mr. Armstrong in making salaratus. He was from Buffalo, N. Y. He understood his busines and carried it on successfully for several years, was a good citizen and had a nice family.

About the year 1852 our present railroad known as the Big Four was built from Indianapolis to Lafayette, and later, on to Chicago, and Zionsville was laid out. As everybody wanted to go to the new railroad town, the glory of our much loved village soon departed. The two taverns and churches were moved to Zionsville, and also many of the dwelling houses. The ground on which they stood is now in cultivated gardens.

Our parents, like all pioneers, had to work very hard and taught their children to be industrious; but with all their hardships and privations people enjoyed life then as much as they do now with all their luxuries. They were always ready to lend a helping hand when needed and always ready to divide any luxury they might chance to have, with their near neighbors. They would often go and spend an evening with some neighbor and always take supper; and in turn, they would come to our house and spend the evening and take supper; and thus they passed their long winter evenings. I have known my parents to go three miles in a sled in the afternoon and stay till ten o'clock and then return.

Everybody had to wear homemade clothes, and you may be assured they did not wear out soon either. They would spin the wool in summer to make clothes for winter, and spin flax in winter to make clothes for summer. My older sister could always beat me spinning wool. She could spin sixteen cuts a day, while I never could spin but twelve cuts; but I could always keep even with her spinning flax or weaving.

The people had gatherings of different kinds. The men had log-rollings, wood-choppings and corn-huskings. The women had quiltings, apple-cuttings, and wool-pickings. Of course the opposite sex were invited and they enjoyed a gala

day. The ladies of the village always considered it a great treat to go to Mrs. Gregory's wool-pickings.

It required a great deal of work to get the wool ready for the weaver. It was shorn from the sheep sometime in May, then washed and picked by hand, then sent to the carding mill which was then at Indianapolis, fourteen miles away. After carding into rolls, the process of spinning commenced. When that was done, the yarn had to be all washed clean, then colored some color. For jeans, either blue or brown. The brown was colored with walnut hulls. For dresses they used green, red, and blue, and we thought we had very pretty dresses. Later on a man by the name of Lyons came to our vicinity and built a carding mill a mile north of the village, but he did very poor work. He was succeeded by a Mr. Liebhardt, who understood his business and did good work in carding, spinning, and weaving. The same mill is now owned by his son, D. E. Liebhardt, who carries on his business very successfully and keeps pace with the times.

My father always kept a yoke of oxen and a cart. He sold a great deal of wood to the village people and thus paid for store goods, shoe making, blacksmithing, etc. The oxen were so well trained that when he wanted to yoke them, he would put the yoke on the off ox first, then with the bow in his hand would motion to the other ox, calling him by name, and he would obediently walk under the yoke, and that was all the harness they wore. The tongue of the cart was fastened to the yoke. The cart bed was fastened by a pivot or hinge in the middle of the bed and when he wanted to unload the cart, all he had to do was to unhook the cart bed from the tongue of the cart, when the bed would drop back and the load would all go out at once.

My father's barn, like the house, was made of logs. It had two apartments with a space between, about twelve feet. This space had a good plank floor, made tight. There they threshed their wheat and oats. This was done in winter, when cold and dry. My father always threshed his grain with flails. Flails were two long sticks with the ends tied together with strong cord or rope. One would stand at each end and pound away all day. How would men like that way of threshing wheat now?

It was not much trouble to cook for the hands, as there

were only two of them. Then it all had to be run through a wind mill. They did not often sow over five acres, as that made enough for their bread. At a very early day the reap hook was used, but as far back as I can remember the cradle was used.

I well remember the first threshing machine I ever saw. It was in the year 1847. It was built on a wagon, and was arranged so the motion of the wagon caused the machinery to work. They drove in a circle and the straw dropped off while the wheat was caught in a large box below, which had to be emptied about every round. Then it all had to be run through a fanning mill. Later on they got the stationary machines, run by horse power, which both threshed and winnowed it.

We always raised a patch of flax; about a half acre, sometimes more. It was a great deal of work to take care of. It had to be all pulled up by the roots. Every child that had strength enough was mustered in the service. Then the seed was threshed off and it was spread out in some grassy spot to rot, which required about four weeks. Then it was taken up and put in a dry place, ready for the flax break. After it was well broken it had to be dressed; that is, the woody part had to be beaten off. This was done by holding the bundle, or as much as a man could hold in his hand, across an upright board, prepared for the purpose, and beating with a wooden knife, made of some kind of hard wood, generally hickory. It had to be beaten till all the woody part was gone, nothing left but the fibre. Then it was finished by the hackle, ready for spinning. The hackle was made of smooth teeth about four inches long and about as large around as an eight-penny nail. They were set in a board about six inches square and about two feet long, to make it convenient to hold between the knees. The flax was drawn through this hackle till it was all combed out nice and smooth, when it was ready for the spinning wheel. The fibre that was combed out was called tow, and was sometimes spun to make towels, bed-ticks, etc. The tow was also in great demand by the hunters, as they used it for wadding in their guns. No hunter thought of starting out without his pocket full of tow.

One may think that people did not have much time for sport, but the young folks always watched their chances and occasionally took a day off for some kind of amusement. The

boys too were on the lookout for a day to hunt or fish. Wild game was plentiful. Such as deer, turkey, squirrel, coon, groundhogs and many other kinds. There was no end to the fish in Eagle Creek. Fishing was their chief amusement. I remember at one time my two brothers, Benjamin and Lewis, went fishing late in the afternoon. They had permission to stay a while after dark, as the fish bite much better then, which they accordingly did. When they got ready to start for home, after they had gone a short distance, their light, which was hickory bark torch, went out, and the night being very dark and misting rain, they soon lost their way. After wandering around awhile, they became discouraged and sat down in despair by a big oak tree, thinking they would have to stay there all night, when to their joy they saw a light coming in the distance, which proved to be a man with a lantern, on his way home from the village. They called to him and he readily went to them and took them home, to the great joy of our parents who were becoming very anxious about them. At another time when they went fishing, they were caught in a windstorm while passing through a deadening and narrowly escaped being killed by falling timber.

We also used to go root-digging, as there was ready sale for various kinds of roots, which were used for medical purposes. Such as yellow root, snake root, lady slipper, ginseng, and many other kinds. We dug the roots in the autumn. The woods would sometimes be full of women and children in pursuit of these roots.

I remember on one occasion, myself and two brothers, Benjamin and Lewis, went one afternoon to dig roots. After hunting and playing around, our dog ran onto a blacksnake. I wanted to run and leave Mister Snake to his freedom, but the boys and the dog were determined to kill him, which they did after quite a combat. As we thought it quite a trophy to show at home, the boys tied a string around its neck and started, as we thought, for home. But after wandering around a while we found that we were lost. The woods then was a dense forest. Finally off at a distance we saw a clearing to which we went and found a house, gladly dropping our snake in the forest, to learn our way home. We knew the family that lived there and they put us on the right road home, which was two miles away.

At that time orchards were scarce and apples hard to get. Sometimes a teamster would pass with apples to sell. They came from some of the southern counties, which were settled much earlier than our county, Boone. They always had an apple on a stick at the front end of the wagon for a sign. Mother bought some occasionally, but father soon set out an orchard and in a few years we had apples in abundance. Wild fruit was plentiful, such as blackberries, much larger than we see now, plums, grapes, and crabapples. Mother always kept preserves of some kind, nearly always crabapple preserves. She dried blackberries and wild grapes, as that was all the way they knew for keeping fruit at that time. She also made a good deal of pumpkin butter and dried pumpkin for pies. We always made our own sugar and molasses from the sugar maples. Sugar making was a great treat to us children, after being housed up with a cold winter.

I have told you something of our hardships, privations, pleasures and amusements of our early pioneer life. Now comes a more serious chapter. We worked on as I have told you through rough and smooth, till the spring of 1847, when our father died with pneumonia. He was sick only three days, took his bed Wednesday and died Friday at eleven o'clock. Sister Martha was then a little past two years old and three others less than thirteen, so you can see our mother had a great burden to bear. My brother James, then about twenty-four years of age, stayed at home and settled up the business. He got permission of the court to sell some of the property at private sale, and paid off what debts there were, and the farm was left undivided till the children were all of age, and thus our mother was enabled to keep her home and also keep her family together and have for them a comfortable living. We had all learned the value of industry and economy and thus could help one another.

The second year after my father's death, Brother Benjamin took charge of the farm, and was more like a father than a brother. He was always kind and thoughtful. Mother still kept up her dairy business and thus succeeded in rearing her children. Her greatest ambition was to raise her children to be good and useful citizens, and she lived to see her prayers and efforts rewarded, as they were all well situated and respected, and had good homes of their own before she died.

She died December 3rd, 1872, at the age of seventy-one. She joined the Baptist church at the age of seventeen and remained a faithful member until her death. And through her prayerful life and patience in afflictions she has gained the reward that awaits the righteous, and passed through the Pearly Gates beyond the River.

My father was also a member of the Baptist church, in politics a Whig. When quite a young man he was under conviction and joined the Baptist church, and was making preparations to be baptized, when his father (our grandfather), who was one of those most devout Scotch Methodists and would often stop by the wayside to pray, wishing to lead his children in his own faith, and being decidedly opposed to baptism by immersion, said to him, "Peter, think well before you take the step." At this remark my father hesitated and became discouraged and remained out of the church until about three years before his death. He was very industrious and would often work on the Sabbath, but never required it of his children.

One Sunday morning as was his custom, he took his axe on his shoulder and started for his clearing. His way led past the garden, and while passing he heard the voice of prayer, and looking over among the currant bushes, he saw his young daughter Mary, on her knees in her morning devotions. That smote his conscience, so he went back, laid down his axe, and kept the Sabbath. The conviction never left him and some time during that year he united with the Baptist church. Thus by the prayers of his child was he led back to the Saviour.

Notwithstanding the hardships of pioneer life, we all managed to get a moderately good education for the times. James, my oldest brother, commenced teaching when about twenty years of age, and was a very successful teacher for several years. Then he studied medicine and made quite a success in the medical profession. Mary, my oldest sister, taught two terms of school, when failing health prevented further work, and she died at the age of nineteen, in the year 1845. Brother Benjamin taught several schools. Sister Martha also taught for several years. She taught one school year in Indianapolis.

At the age of seventeen I taught my first school at Eagle

Village. I taught by subscription, received \$1.25 per scholar. I afterward taught a good many schools, some by subscription and some for public money. I never received over a dollar a day for teaching a public school, and when by subscription \$2.50 per scholar for a term of sixty-five days. In early days the teacher had to make pens for the pupils out of goose quills. It was quite an accomplishment to be a good pen-maker and good writer. Sometime before I quit teaching, the steel pen was used, which was a great relief to teachers.

My teaching was mostly summer work. I would commence about the first of April and close the last of June. I continued teaching till the fall of 1861, when I was married, September 26th. To this union were born five children, three boys and two girls. My girls died at the age of twenty-two each. God who overrules all has received them, and I must not murmur or repine over my lot. I know that I have much for which to be thankful, and leave these few pages for you to look over and when you think your lot hard, think of the blessings you enjoy and the many good things you have which at your age your ancestors never heard of.

I have now nearly reached my three score years and ten. I have seen our beloved country in its natural state of wildness and beauty as God's handiwork. He has given us a very beautiful world to live in, but few of us appreciate it as we should, and like the Children of Israel of old, are disposed to continually murmur and find fault and fear we will not have enough of this world's goods. But in all these long years we have never passed through one in which we did not have enough of our needs.

I have lived to see our beloved country bud and blossom as the rose. The pioneer cabin has passed away and in its place stand good frame or brick buildings, some almost stately mansions. I have also seen the mud and corduroy roads of previous years turned into nice, solid, gravel roads, and the streams all spanned by good iron bridges. By our present mode of travel we can go hundreds of miles in a few hours, when by the old mode described in the beginning of this sketch it would require as many days, and perhaps more. Our daily mail is now delivered at our gate. Our ancestors thought it a great blessing to get mail twice a week.

We are told in God's word, "Trust in the Lord and do good

and verily thou shalt be fed." I now leave you this little narrative, hoping God will bless you all, and that we may all meet around His Great White Throne, and there be crowned heirs of His Kingdom.